

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates. The cable ownership

cap is a crucial element of our democratic media, and it should not be weakened.

As the Commission considers relaxing ownership limits so media companies can gain greater efficiencies and profits through consolidation, please be mindful that these commercial priorities may not best serve the public interest. In fact, these commercial priorities may conflict with the needs of democracy.

Please consider these principles when reviewing media ownership rules:

(1) THE RIGHTS OF VIEWERS AND LISTENERS, NOT MEDIA OWNERS, ARE PARAMOUNT &#8211; While striving to promote competition in the media sector, the Commission should adopt ownership rules that retain the public's free speech rights as listeners and speakers and citizens&#8217; collective right to have the media function consistently with the ends and purposes of the First Amendment.

(2) COMMITMENT TO LOCALISM &#8211; Media outlets should serve communities, not markets. The needs of communities must be ascertained and addressed by fair, balanced and ample programming. Issues of importance at the local, state, federal, and international level must be given significant, substantive and issue-oriented coverage.

(3) THE NEEDS OF DEMOCRACY &#8211; A well-functioning democracy depends on access to information and ideas and an informed citizenry is vital to a democracy that prizes both accountability and deliberation. The needs of our Nation's democracy demand fairness of debate in political coverage and the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources. During elections, viewers have a right to coverage of competing candidates and viewpoints. Candidates should be given the opportunity to address voters through a variety of formats including, but not limited to, debates, interviews, features and grants of free airtime.

(4) TREATMENT OF NEWS, PUBLIC EVENTS, EMERGENCIES, AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES &#8211; Media serve educational and democratic functions. Communities have a right to fair and balanced treatment of news, public events, emergencies, and controversial public issues. To permit the genuine understanding of problems and disagreements, citizens need access to local and national news through factual, fair and unbiased reporting that is clearly distinguished from advertising. Owners should be prevented from influencing editorial practices in order to protect corporate interests

(5) DIVERSITY &#8211; Diverse voices shall find expression in the media. The strength of our democracy flows from the diversity of our voices. Media should provide a platform through which the public will express its views on issues of community interest. As a window to the world for viewers, media employment should mirror religious, demographic, racial and ethnic diversity.